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XIII. — *Dionysiac Magic and the Greek Land of Cockaigne*

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THE Land of Cockaigne, or glutton's paradise, is an idea made familiar to students of the history of English literature by a Middle English poem of the thirteenth century,¹ which is undoubtedly related to similar products of various continental literatures. It was recognized long ago² that these mediaeval fables about the Land of Cockaigne, or *Schlaraffenland*, had ancient analogues, especially in certain fragments of the Attic comedy which were collected by Athenaeus (267 e–270 a). The resemblances between the Greek and the mediaeval Cockaigne are in fact quite close, even in certain details — such, for example, as the rivers flowing with choice beverages, and the roasted birds that fly into men's mouths.³

It is an interesting question whether the description of the mediaeval Cockaigne rests upon a tradition traceable to a classical original, or was independently developed from disconnected bits of folk-lore, especially proverbial sayings about a fool's paradise in the Land of Nowhere — elements universally diffused and springing directly from the popular imagination. I incline to the former opinion, because the idea was widely disseminated in the later Greek world,⁴ and there must, in my judgment, have been various channels by which it could be transmitted into the literature of the Middle Ages. Still, in the absence of direct evidence, the latter view is the safer,

¹ Mätzner-Goldbeck, *Allenglische Sprachproben*, I, 147 ff.

² K. Schenkl, in *Germania*, VII, 193.

³ Discussion of these resemblances may the more properly be omitted here, because they were treated by Professor E. L. Green in *PAPA*, XXXIV, p. xxxii.

⁴ Cf. Poeschel, "Das Märchen vom Schlaraffenlande" (in Paul and Braune's *Beiträge z. Gesch. d. deutsch. Sprache u. Litt.* v; also published separately), pp. 395 ff., esp. p. 403; Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*², p. 210 n; Graf, *Miti, Leggende, e Superstizioni del Medio Evo*, I, p. 229.

and it is held by investigators of importance.¹ The problem can be solved, if it can be solved at all, only by a specialist in the field of mediaeval literature, and it does not affect the purpose of the present paper. In fact, the mediaeval fables of this type are mentioned here only because "Cockaigne," like the German "Schlaraffenland," is a term convenient for use because of its freedom from certain associations that might obscure the relations of the classical material. For example, "Golden Age," "Paradise," and "Elysium" are all open to objection on this score.

The various descriptions of the Greek Cockaigne cannot be discussed in detail, interesting as they are; but the following essential features should be noted:

1. The place where men enjoy the characteristic delights of Cockaigne is distant, or the time long past. Cratinus, (Πλοῦτοι, 1, 64 Kock) placed his "hungry man's heaven" in the reign of Kronos, like Hesiod's Golden Age. Teleclides (Ἀμφικτύονες, 1, 209 K.) placed it in the time of Amphictyon, the eponym of the Amphictyonic league — a circumstance that is to be explained by the political bearing of his play; but the language of his description is strongly reminiscent of Hesiod.² Pherecrates (Πέρσαι, 1, 182 K.) described a Schlaraffenland among the Persians, whose barbaric luxury was proverbial, and Metagenes (Θουριοπέρσαι, 1, 706 K.) located a similar paradise among the self-indulgent inhabitants of Magna Graecia. In another play (Μεταλλῆς, 1, 174 K.) Pherecrates described a veritable land of Cockaigne as existing in the subterranean world of the dead.³

2. In these havens of luxury men enjoy absolute exemption from labor and toil.

3. Food and drink are always at hand in unlimited abundance. Streams or showers of wine are mentioned in two cases.⁴

¹ So Poeschel, *op. cit.*, p. 426, and Erich Schmidt, "Das Schlaraffenland," in *Cosmopolis*, VI, p. 249.

² With l. 3 of the fragment cited, ἡ γῆ δ' ἔφερ' οὐ δέος οὐδὲ νόσους, ἀλλ' αὐτῶματ' ἦν τὰ δέοντα, cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 112, 117 f.

³ Zielinski, *Die Märchenkomödie in Athen*, p. 27, interprets the *Μεταλλῆς* as a race of gnomes, or kobolds, living a life of luxury in the heart of the earth.

⁴ Telecl. 1, 209 K., l. 4; Pherecr. 1, 182 K., l. 6.

The comic accounts of the Land of Cockaigne are very generally regarded simply as parodies of Hesiod's description of the Golden Age,¹ in the following lines of the *Works and Days* (109-120):

χρύσειον μὲν πρῶτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
 ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες.
 οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὃ τ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασιλευεν
 ὥς τε θεοὶ δ' ἔζωον ἀκηδία θυμὸν ἔχοντες,
 νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ οἰζύος· οὐδέ τι δειλὸν
 γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι
 τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων·
 θνήσκον δ' ὡς θ' ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι· ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα
 τοῖσιν ἔην· καρπὸν δ' ἔφερεν ζειδωρος ἄρουρα
 αὐτομάτῃ πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον· οἱ δ' ἐβελήμοι
 ἦσυχοι ἔργ' ἐνέμοντο σὺν ἐσθλοῖσιν πολέεσσιν
 ἀφνειοὶ μῆλοισι, φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν.

Certain points of resemblance are indeed manifest. The freedom of the Golden Men from toil, and the fact that the earth gave them her fruits in plenty without cultivation might have served as the point of departure for what we may call the comic fable of Cockaigne. Also, as noted above, the language of one of the comic writers recalls the words of Hesiod, with evident intent. But it is far from likely that the comic Cockaigne owes its existence solely to the desire to parody Hesiod. In the first place, Hesiod's story of the ages of mankind has a distinct moral tone; the account of the Golden Age is an apologue in praise of simplicity and innocence rather than of bygone sensual delights. It is significant that the streams of wine which figure in the comic Cockaigne find no place in Hesiod. Dionysus, the giver of the vine, belongs to the age of Zeus, not to that of Kronos; and it may be that Hesiod deliberately excluded from that happy world the fruit of the vine, which he elsewhere calls ἀνδράσι χάρμα καὶ ἄχθος.²

¹ So E. L. Green, *l.c.*; cf. the remark on Pherecrates' *Μεταλλῆς* in Christ, *Griech. Litteraturgesch.*⁵ p. 389.

² Hesiod, fr. 121 (Rzach); *Scut.* 400. Hesiod's phrase τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι (*W. and D.* 115) does not contradict the suggestion offered above.

Later Greeks, and the Roman poets, did, indeed, speak of rivers of wine, milk, and honey flowing in the Golden Age. So Lucian, for example; but Lucian manifestly derives his ideas of the age of Kronos from the comedy rather than from Hesiod.¹ As for Virgil and Ovid,² who mention these miraculous streams in connection with the happy state of the pious Golden Men, they are at least recording the fable seriously and in a spirit different from Lucian's. Yet they certainly did not derive these miraculous streams from Hesiod — a fact which commentators have overlooked; hence one must believe either that their serious descriptions were indirectly influenced by the comic paradise, or that allowance must be made for still another source.

In the Golden Age which Empedocles imagined, Aphrodite was queen, and men worshipped her with libations, not of wine, but of oil and honey;³ and in a myth of the *Symposium*⁴ Plato touches upon the absence of wine in the days of the early gods. The Greeks seem, in fact, to have been dimly conscious of a time in the remote past when wine was an unknown beverage; and certainly every Greek must have known that wine was not used in some of their most ancient drink-offerings.⁵

There is, then, good reason for emphasizing the simplicity and temperance of the Hesiodic Age of Gold; and in view of this, one is tempted to say that if the various comic poets who described a Land of Cockaigne were only burlesquing Hesiod, their wit is somewhat wide of the mark. One might rather expect something like Glaukon's outburst of contempt for the rustic simplicity of Socrates' "first city."⁶ This, however, is doubtless demanding too severe a consistency of the Attic fun-makers.

But thanks chiefly to the researches of Zielinski and Cru-

¹ Luc. *Sat.* 7, *Ep. Sat.* 20; cf. the comic fragments in Athen. 267 e ff.

² Virg. *Georg.* 1, 132; Ov. *Met.* 1, 111.

³ Emped. ap. Porph. *de Abst.* 11, 21.

⁴ 203 B.

⁵ Theophrastus ap. Porph. *de Abst.* 11, 20; cf. Stengel's *Opferbräuche der Griechen*, 36 f., 180.

⁶ Plato, *Rep.* 372 D.

sus,¹ we are able to view the moral fable of the Golden Age and the comic descriptions of Cockaigne in their true relations. By careful examination of the remains of ancient *Märchen* and proverb-lore, these scholars have shown that there must have existed from very ancient times, probably long before Hesiod, various Greek folk-sayings about a time when, or a place where, men lived a life of luxurious ease, with food and drink ever ready at hand, and untroubled by the incubus of toil and penury. The notion of this Utopia sprang directly from the fancy of the people, and was without exact limitation in space or time. And, as is usually the case in genuinely ancient popular fancies, no moral element was involved in it. Hence one might place it in the past, in the time of Kronos, in the distant future, or even in the present, in some remote corner of the world. Furthermore, not being, like Hesiod, encumbered with a theory of man's primitive innocence and simplicity, the Greeks who imagined this Land of Cockaigne did not begrudge to its inhabitants an unlimited indulgence of their appetites. So in all probability we should regard Hesiod's story of the Golden Age as a moralized version of the older popular fable — a view which is in itself reasonable, since Hesiod was, so far as we know, the first Greek poet to approach the raw material of myth and religion with an expressed didactic purpose. The comic accounts of the Land of Cockaigne (wherever or whenever placed) would then be primarily elaborations of the ancient popular theme, in kindred spirit, but with greater wealth of fancy; and the reminiscences of Hesiod which they contain would be of secondary importance.

Let us now examine certain peculiarities of the mythology and religion of Dionysus which resemble some features of the

¹ Zielinski, *Die Märchenkomödie in Athen*, esp. pp. 4 f., pp. 20 ff. This little tract, published at St. Petersburg in 1885, is now, unfortunately, almost unobtainable. Crusius, "Märchenreminiscenzen im antiken Sprichwort," in *Verhandl. d. 40 Versamml. deutscher Phil. u. Schulm.*, 1889, pp. 36 ff. As early as 1838 Bergk had pointed out that both the Hesiodic and the comic versions of the Golden Age are developed from a body of popular beliefs about a period of primitive felicity, such as are attested in the literatures of all ancient peoples (*Comm. de reliquiis comœdiæ Atticæ antiquæ*, pp. 188, 191).

comic Lubberland. As a starting point, it is convenient to take two familiar passages from Euripides' *Bacchae*. In the choral description of the revel of Dionysus and his followers there occurs the sentence (l. 141):

ῥεῖ δὲ γάλακτι πέδον, ῥεῖ δ' οἶνω, ῥεῖ δὲ μελισσᾶν νέκταρι.

Later in the play the messenger who spies upon the doings of the *Bacchae* describes the strange sight as follows (704 ff.):

θύρσον δέ τις λαβοῦσ' ἔπαισεν ἐς πέτραν,
ὅθεν δροσώδης ὕδατος ἐκπηδᾷ νοτὶς ·
ἄλλη δὲ νάρθηκ' ἐς πέδον καθήκε γῆς,
καὶ τῇδε κρήνην ἐξανήκ' οἶνου θεός ·
ὅσαις δὲ λευκοῦ πώματος πόθος παρήν,
ἄκροισι δακτύλοισι διαμῶσαι χθόνα
γάλακτος ἐσμούς· εἶχον · ἐκ δὲ κισσίνων
θύρσων γλυκεῖαι μέλιτος ἔσταζον ῥοαί.

In the former passage the miraculous streams gush forth at the appearance of the god; in the latter, they are produced, through the power of Dionysus, by his human votaries. The resemblance to the rivers of wine in the comic Cockaigne is close enough. It remains to be considered whether this resemblance is significant.

Commentators upon Euripides have, I believe, without exception failed to observe this parallelism. It did not, however, escape the notice of Usener, who makes use of it in his essay *Milch und Honig*.¹ In this article he illustrates at great length the mystic virtues which were attributed to milk and honey in Greek myth and religion, and in certain early Christian rites, where they were practically sacramental elements. In addition to the passages from Euripides which I have quoted, Usener collects a number of others in which the epiphany of the wine-god is marked by the appearance of miraculous streams like those produced by the *Bacchae*. For example, Nicander² related a story that in order to convert the unbelieving daughters of Minyas, Dionysus caused milk and nectar to flow from the beams of their loom. An older

¹ *Rhein. Mus.* LVII, 177 ff.

² Ap. Anton. Lib. 10.

instance of the kind appears in the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus* (35 ff.), where the god reveals himself to the Tyrrhenian pirates by means of the rills of wine which he causes to flow through their ship. Further evidence is not needed here. As to the wonder-working of the Bacchae, Usener holds that the power of the god passes over to his votaries.¹

In interpreting the Bacchic marvels, Usener argues about as follows :² Honey is the food of the gods, milk and honey the diet upon which heroes and bards favored of the gods are reared to greatness. Streams of milk and honey, therefore, belong to the land of the gods. Now the life of men in the happy Golden Age is like that of the gods.³ Dionysus, then, wherever he reveals himself and his religion, restores by his miracles the paradise which man once enjoyed, but which was later reserved for gods and heroes. Hence the frequent mention of streams of milk and honey in the mythology of Dionysus.

There are, in my judgment, decided objections to Usener's treatment of the Dionysiac miracle. In the first place, in his zeal to set forth the religious significance of milk and honey, he puts quite into the background the frequent mention of marvellous streams of wine. Now wine is certainly not the beverage of the gods ; and whereas Usener accepts Roscher's theory⁴ that honey is the food of the gods, — ambrosia and nectar being identified with honey and mead, — others are not convinced. For my part, I share the scepticism expressed by Wernicke in the article "Ambrosia" in the Pauly-Wissowa encyclopaedia. Whatever sanctity attaches to milk and honey in Greek legend and cult is to be explained, in my opinion, by the fact that the Greeks thought of these things as among the primeval foods that sustained the life of early man, and hence, in a certain sense, sacred. Again, even if it be conceded for the moment that the miracles of Dionysus are symbols of the paradise of the gods, it is by no means

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 178.

² *Op. cit.* pp. 178 ff.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 181; cf. *Sinfthutsagen*, p. 201.

⁴ Set forth in Roscher's article "Ambrosia" in the *Lexikon der Mythologie*; his treatise *Nektar und Ambrosia* (Leipzig, 1883) is not accessible to me.

easy to see why Dionysus, a later comer into the pantheon, should be represented as heralding the return of the age of innocence and communion with the gods.

This negative criticism could perhaps be carried further, but I prefer to suggest another interpretation of the phenomenon. As a preliminary to the explanation that I shall offer, I would call attention to one significant fact. The Dionysiac miracles which have been under discussion do not belong entirely to the province of mythology. In Andros, in Teos, and probably in Naxos, a spring of wine appeared upon the festival of the god of the vine.¹ In Elis, at a festival of the same kind, bowls left empty in a sealed room (of the temple?) were found full of wine the following morning. In all these cases we may be sure that some pious fraud was practised; but the important thing is that in connection with the actual cult of Dionysus, in several places, an attempt was made to reproduce the wine-miracle — a circumstance which seems to me to mark the phenomenon as of ancient origin, and of specifically Dionysiac character. Hence I am all the more doubtful whether Usener is right in saying, à propos of such marvellous streams, that Dionysus merely brings to earth the paradise of the gods and heroes.

There is a curious legend — as old as Hesiod or older, for its earliest form was embodied in the lost *Cypria* — which describes certain marvellous powers possessed by the daughters of Anios, who were called *Οἰνοτρόφοι*, or nurses of the vine.² These maidens, three in number, were descendants of Dionysus, and had received from him the power to produce wine, oil, and grain, at will. The author of the *Cypria* represented Anios as inviting the Greeks to remain in his country, since there his daughters could, by their divinely-given powers, provide sustenance for the army until the fated day of Troy's fall should arrive. In view of the connection

¹ The authorities for these wine-miracles, as well as for the one in Elis, may be conveniently consulted in Nilsson's *Griechische Feste*, pp. 277 f., 291–293.

² *Cypria*, fr. 17 (Kinkel), from *Schol. Lycophr.* 570, 580. In accepting *Οἰνοτρόφοι* rather than *Οἰνοτρόποι* as the earlier form of the name, I follow Wentzel, the chief authority on the literary history of the myth (*Philologus*, LI, 46 ff.).

of these richly gifted maidens with Dionysus,¹ I am disposed to identify them with the Nurses of Dionysus, the Bacchae or Maenads of Euripides' play; they are the mythical prototypes of the human votaries of Dionysus, the vegetation-god. Euripides' Bacchae produce wine, milk, honey, and springs of water. The daughters of Anios produce wine, oil, and grain. Now grain, oil, and wine belong, beyond dispute, to the ordinary food and drink of men, and do not complicate the question with difficulties about their supposed mystic meaning, as in the case of the milk and honey of the Bacchae.

It seems to me that there is a comparatively simple explanation for this whole group of mythical elements. The legend of the daughters of Anios, and ultimately the account of the doings of the Bacchae, are reflections of a very ancient magical practice, which I conceive to have been as follows: the practitioners first worked themselves into a sort of frenzy — we are expressly told that the Maenads drew their miraculous supplies of milk and honey only when in a frenzied condition² — and then went through a pantomime of bringing up from the earth, or from rivers and springs, wine, oil, milk, honey, or what not, in the greatest plenty; the object of the whole performance being to stimulate the fertility of the earth.³ Examples of the practice of producing that which one desires by going through a pantomime of obtaining or possessing it could be cited from the magical ceremonies of modern savages, but must be omitted here.⁴ The course of this Greek magical practice is a normal one. The magical act, in place of being within the powers of all practitioners, is removed into the past and associated only with certain mythical personages; and then, as magic falls into the background

¹ This Dionysiac connection is recognized by Usener, *Sintfluthsagen*, p. 98, and by Eisele in the article "Oinotrophoi" in Roscher's *Lexikon*.

² Plato, *Ion*, 534 A; cf. Aeschin. *Socr. ap. Aristid.* vol. II, p. 23, Dind., and the sentence *οι βακχευόμενοι καὶ κορυβαντιῶντες ἐνθουσιάζουσι μέχρις ἂν τὸ ποθοῦμενον ἴδωσιν*, Philo *de Vit. Contempl.* 2, p. 473 M. See also Rohde, *Psyche*, II, pp. 11, 18, and esp. 24 f., on the frenzy of "medicine-men."

³ The running of the Bacchae with flaming torches is recognized as vegetation-magic by Voigt in Roscher's *Lexikon*, I, 1040 ff., and Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

⁴ See Frazer, *Golden Bough* ³ (1911), I, 85–89.

and the personality of a god of vegetation emerges, the magical powers formerly exercised by human beings come to be a miraculous prerogative of the god. In other words, where Usener¹ says that the power of the god is transferred to his worshippers, I should maintain that the wonders wrought by the human adept in vegetation-magic are in time transferred to the evolving god of vegetation. Thus arise the myth about the daughters of Anios, the legends about the wondrous feats of the Bacchae, and, finally, the stories of the miracles of Dionysus himself.

The miracles of Dionysus, then, are not derived from popular notions about the paradise of the gods or the Golden Age, nor from that vaguer, more fanciful conception which we have called the Land of Cockaigne. There is a connection, no doubt, but it is a remote one, lying far down among the fibres of the primitive mind. It may indeed be said that the mere longing of struggling, hungry, hard-worked man for the ease and comfort which he has not, gives rise both to the magical practice whence spring the legends of Dionysiac miracles, and to the fables about the Age of Plenty in the past and the Paradise of the future.

Another question now suggests itself. Did Dionysiac miracle and legend have anything to do with the introduction of rivers of wine into the comic Cockaigne and the post-Hesiodic paradise or Golden Age? A positive reply seems impossible. It is true that both branches of the Greek drama grew up in connection with the worship of Dionysus, and miraculous supplies of good things — a Dionysiac heaven — naturally played a part in the riotous satyr-play, and doubtless also in the earliest comedy.² For example, in Euripides' *Cyclops* there is an allusion to the rills of wine that are ever to be found in the presence of Dionysus,³ and, in this same play, there figures a magical skin of wine, which always holds twice as much as is taken from it.⁴ This circumstance

¹ So also Voigt, 1042, and Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, v, 108, 162.

² Cf. Graf, "Ad aureae aetatis fabulam symbola," *Leipz. Stud.* VIII, p. 58.

³ *Cycl.* 67.

⁴ *Ib.* 147. Possibly the magic skin played a part in Cratinus' 'Οδυσσεύς, to which the *Cyclops* may owe something; see Christ, *Litteraturgesch.*⁵, I, p. 388.

reminds one of a feature of the Lubberland of Pherecrates, who says that no matter how much one ate or drank, there was always twice as much left.¹ It is indeed possible, I suppose, that the marvellous streams of wine, etc., were introduced into the simpler picture of the Golden Age under the influence of Dionysiac legends;² and so the rivers of wine, milk, and honey which Virgil and Ovid mention in their accounts of the Golden Age — a departure from the Hesiodic description — may be explained as a feature of the Dionysiac paradise, transmitted by some Hellenistic channel. On the other hand, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that the fancy about rivers of delightful beverages existing in a "Land where wishes come true," arose independently. In that case, the only connection between the Bacchic marvels and the Greek Cockaigne would be the remote psychological one mentioned in the last paragraph.³

¹ Pherecr. I, 174 K., l. 31 f.

² Stade (*Zeitschr. für die alttestam. Wiss.* XXII, 323) thinks that Dionysiac influence in Canaan may account for the "land flowing with milk and honey"; as to which see also Cheyne, *Traditions and Beliefs of Ancient Israel*, p. 84.

³ But the Cockaigne in the lower world, at any rate, may be well interpreted as an outgrowth of Dionysiac miracles. Dionysus is lord of the souls, and eternal revelry is for his followers. Possibly this explains the use of vine-branches in Greek funeral ceremonies. Cf. Rohde, *Psyche*,⁴ I, 219, 2; 315, 2; II, 13, n; 45, 1.